

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> King's College London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 19 Politics and International Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Saving Lives through Military Ethics Education		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2015 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
David Whetham	Professor of Ethics and the Military Profession, Director of the King's Centre for Military Ethics	From September 2003
Martin Bricknell	Professor in Conflict, Health and Military Medicine	From April 2019
Andrea Ellner	Lecturer in Defence Studies	From September 2007
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

### 1. Summary of the impact

Fostering ethical awareness and moral decision-making in military personnel is a proven way of reducing harm and suffering in conflict situations. However, military institutions often lack the tools or expertise to deliver effective military ethics training. King's College London's Centre for Military Ethics has played a pioneering role in the expansion of previously non-existent military ethics teaching worldwide. It has pioneered freely accessible, disruptive ethics education, transforming military pedagogy, impacting strategy and the capacity of military institutions internationally. Endorsed by the UK Defence Academy, translated into multiple languages and reaching soldiers in 162 countries, King's research and materials have influenced military personnel around the world, building their decision-making capacity, shaping their conduct on operations, and ultimately, saving lives.

### 2. Underpinning research

Research from King's College London's Centre for Military Ethics [1-6] has shown that military personnel face more diverse, dynamic and rapidly changing ethical challenges than ever before. It has also confirmed that teaching ethics to military personnel is an important way of equipping individuals with tools to be able to make the right decisions when they need to. Even at its most basic, King's has shown how this type of education can fundamentally change the way that combatants think about using lethal force. As well as an extensive body of research in this area, a series of interconnected programmes of research have helped to uncover the challenges facing military education and provide potential solutions in a variety of military settings, including the military medical environment.

#### The challenges facing military ethics education

After extensive consultation and research with military institutions worldwide, including detailed surveys carried out on behalf of the UK and Nigerian governments, King's has found that while responsible states aspire to deliver military ethics training, many lack the tools or expertise to do so [1]. Even states that take the subject very seriously can still have gaps in their institutional ethics, especially when it comes to topics such as equality and equal opportunities [2]. King's research has brought to light a pressing and unsatisfied demand for military ethics teaching that has not been met by the few existing professional military ethicists worldwide [1] and highlighted an urgent need to build the capacity of military institutions to be able to deliver effective ethics teaching themselves by creating appropriate pedagogic materials to support them [3].

In addition, King's research revealed that the most demanding leadership is often exercised at the lowest levels of the chain of command (e.g., Special Operations task force, or the 'Strategic Corporal') [1,3] and for this reason moral thinking and ethics education, traditionally only available

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to officers, needed to be accessible to military personnel of all ranks, with diverse educational backgrounds.

### Exploring the structure and content of military ethics education

After King's research had identified the priority to address the gap between what was needed and what was actually being provided, research turned to exploring potential content for the training. This research found that the types of complex moral issues involved in military ethics do not have straightforward answers thus there is the need for education that builds ethical decision-making competency through dialogical engagement and reflection - rather than relying solely on traditional values training that focuses on 'right' and 'wrong' answers in specific situations [1,3]. As such, King's research argued that this, along with the changing ethical landscape of warfare, demanded a radically new approach to military ethics education [1].

King's findings also established that education which normalises routine dialogical engagement with ethical issues is hugely important in shaping the behaviour of military personnel in conflict scenarios and beyond [3,4]. Thus, the research recommended that ethical decision-making training be taken out of the traditional classroom environment and be tailored for different target audiences.

### Exploring the Military Medical Environment

By highlighting that it is not just soldiers that have to make life-and-death decisions or take action in extreme situations, King's research has demonstrated that the environment for military medical personnel is also increasingly challenging in ethical terms [5].

Research undertaken by King's to determine the ethical training and education needs of medical and military professionals, as well as humanitarian actors working in conflict or humanitarian crisis environments, aimed to identify gaps in current provision [8]. Following extensive literature reviews, anonymised interviews were carried out with healthcare workers familiar with crisis medical situations, from nurses and surgeons to humanitarian assistance coordinators and managers. These included individual UK and international military medical personnel, personnel from INGOs, UNHRC, IRC, WHO, ICRC, MSF and medical personnel from the Jordanian Armed Forces, plus Jordanian-based NGOs.

This research uncovered a range of profound ethical challenges faced by health workers in crisis situations and a real gap in training and material to support decision-making in this environment. It also demonstrated a need for a set of scenarios and accompanying guidance, which would not only prepare the said audience for possible ethical dilemmas in the field, but also facilitate ethical decision-making, especially in time sensitive situations. This research resulted in the creation of the 'Military Medical Ethics Playing Cards' outlined below.

### 3. References to the research

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- [1] Whetham, D. (2017) 'Challenges to the Professional Military Ethics Education Landscape', in Carrick, D. Connelly, J. and Whetham D. (eds), *Making the Military Moral: Contemporary Challenges and Responses in Military Ethics Education* Routledge
  - [2] Ellner, A. (2015) 'The Ethics of Inclusion: Gender Equality, Equal Opportunity and Sexual Assault in the Australian, British, Canadian and US Armed Forces', in Lucas, G. R. (ed), *Routledge Handbook of Military Ethics* Routledge
  - [3] Whetham, D. (2020) 'Special Operations Command (SOCOMD): Leadership and Ethics Review'. Annex A of Chapter 3.03 to the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Afghanistan Inquiry (AKA the Brereton Report), pp.504-531.
  - [4] Whetham, D. (2020) What Senior Leaders in Defence Should Know About Ethics and the Role that they Play in Creating the Right Command Climate. Defence Academy of the United Kingdom
  - [5] Bricknell, M., Finn, A. & Palmer, J. (2019) For Debate: Health Service Support Planning for Defensive Land Operations (Parts 1&2), in *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps* (now *BMJ Military Health*) 165 (3), 173-179. DOI:10.1136/jramc-2018-000993
  - [6] Whetham, D. (ed.) (2010) *Ethics, Law and Military Operations*. Palgrave Macmillan.

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### Funding

[7] Nuffield Foundation (1/05/2011-31/10/2013) Audit of European Professional Military Ethics Education

[8] British Academy Mid-Career Fellow 2018 (1/09/17-31/08/18) Global Provision of a Global Good: Making Quality Military Ethics Education Available to Military Institutions Worldwide

### 4. Details of the impact

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Having recognised the need for innovative, accessible pedagogical strategies to meet the challenges of and demand for military ethics education in diverse groups of military personnel, King's has, since 2015, developed and offered freely accessible quality distance learning materials for the use of anyone in the military. This has revolutionised the way Military Ethics has been taught and how policy and strategy have been developed in many different countries.

#### Launching military ethics education solutions – a training course and tools

Drawing on over ten years of research, King's researchers distilled their findings and created a structure for military ethics learning which provided accessible educational themes in online courses. These courses include modules such as 'Armouring against Atrocity' which examines how, in the corrosive environment of war, you can prevent the deterioration of ethical culture [A1]. Each module can be taken by individuals or used as a train-the-trainer template, to build institutional capacity and skills.

Taking military ethics teaching out of the classroom, King's researchers also created multiple versions of the innovative 'Military Ethics Playing Cards' which act as a disruptive vehicle for raising ethical awareness and competency [A1]. These cards take the form of a dialogical game rather than a formal teaching tool which, using their familiar and therefore unthreatening format, can be used in the field or in barracks to prompt informal discussion and debate, normalising engagement and reflection on ethical issues (with QR links to supporting material and videos sharing best practice). Groups of questions are thematically linked so impromptu or pre-planned supported discussions can quickly be developed using the open-access material. The cards help to move the collective narrative from 'this is what I am told to do' to 'this is what we do', with the SAS noting in particular the value of the approach taken in the materials - not to seek to prescribe ethics, but rather to support military personnel to answer ethical questions for themselves, "*to dispel academic ignorance*" and create a self-learning environment [B].

The free online courses and playing cards are not associated exclusively with any one nationality, but rather are a global, professional resource. Following its wide take-up by the UK Armed Forces, the King's online course material has been adopted by the Romanian Staff College, Australian Special Operations (2019, 2020), US Military Chaplains (Sep 2018) and the Australian Command and Staff College (2018 - 2020), as well as the Colombian military. Since the 2016 launch, the online courses have gained nearly 30,000 unique users from 162 different countries and as of Oct 2020 users have worked through 70,187 hours of video content and answered 217,698 questions on military ethics [A3]. Over 5000 packs of playing cards have been distributed to military personnel all over the world, to Australia, Brazil, Brunei, China, Colombia, Jordan, Netherlands, Oman, Romania, Serbia, US and the UK. To meet demand, the website, numerous courses and the playing cards have been translated into Spanish, French, Arabic, Serbian and Turkish through partnerships with the Ministry of Defence, and the European Chapter of the International Society for Military Ethics [A3].

With the identification of the need for more resources specifically for the military medical setting [5,8], King's researchers developed a second set of playing cards to prompt informal discussion about the ethical challenges faced in humanitarian crisis environments (for example: How does one apply triage when lack of resources mean people can be saved today but are likely to die tomorrow from complications?). These 'Military Medical Ethics Playing Cards' have been adapted to be deliverable in the form of a self-contained free app available in English and Arabic [A1].

#### Transforming military pedagogy and strategy

King's researchers have raised the profile of ethics as a subject and re-shaped military curricula to such a point that ethics is now recognised as a significant aspect of training, with King's materials having been absorbed and incorporated into military pedagogy and strategy in a variety

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of different ways. This is evident by direct reference to King's research in the newly-inserted section on military ethics and its importance for strategic leaders in the UK Defence Academy's major report, 'Getting Strategy Right (Enough)' [C p.72] which discusses the art and science of military strategy-making and implementation in the wake of the Chilcot Report.

As a result, specific committees and discussion groups, such as the Ethics Board of the Army's 77<sup>th</sup> Brigade, are forming to *"challenge thinking within the formation from an ethical perspective and promote a culture of ethics in every area of business to ensure the highest possible standard of decision-making, risk management and accountability"* [D]. [text removed for publication]

On the strength of his contributions to military ethics, Prof. Whetham was also appointed an Assistant Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force in 2020 and asked to write an addendum report for the Afghanistan Inquiry Report into the alleged commission of historical war crimes by Australian Special Forces troops [3], focusing on the reasons for failures in leadership and ethics. Whetham's report was released to the public as part of the full publication and has been adopted as a 'lessons learnt' document for institutions across defence. It was referred to specifically by the Australian Chief of Defence, and all its recommendations as to training and education have been officially accepted by the Australian Defence Force [E].

### **Building the capacity of militaries around the world to provide military ethical training**

King's military ethics training resources have, for the first time, enabled military educators to successfully introduce ethical training, normally only provided to officers, to all outside of a classroom environment. In particular, the disruptive playing cards have been used to facilitate this by military chaplains, education officers, and regiment commanders to train soldiers, cadets and junior officers informally [A2] as well as in more formal ethical briefings.

The high-quality military ethics materials have been praised by military trainers as *"very effective"*, and *"extremely useful"* [A2]. For example, a senior commanding officer in the Royal Marines asserted that *"the online material has been especially effective in preparing the Commando's senior leaders to deliver and guide ethical and decision-making training... without this expert primer, the vast ocean of material available on the subject would have swamped us... without the structured course-ware I do not believe we would have been able to achieve the current level of training and education"* [F]. In addition, a consultant physician and Wing Commander in the Royal Air Force described it *"as the most thought-provoking ethics training I have received in either the NHS or the military in 30 years"* [G] and another military trainer called the cards *"by far the best resources for generating conversations about ethics"* he had come across in his 28 years in the Army [A2]. The Director of the Australian Command and Staff Course said *that "students frequently report that the [King's] course has been a leap in their understanding of ethics, the military profession, and their personal morality"* [H].

Aside from military personnel and institutions directly utilising the generic online military ethics courses and playing cards, King's researchers have assisted in the preparation and installation of specific curricula. For example, assisting the Colombian military in reforming their professional military education as they transition to post-conflict military thinking and structures. King's researchers delivered a fully integrated 18-part military ethics curriculum in Spanish with teaching guides and pre-classroom materials, which can now be used as a proven off-the-shelf framework by others. In 2018, King's delivered a two-week train-the-trainer workshop in Bogotá for the local teaching staff. Since then, nearly 1800 Colombian officers and NCOs have undertaken formal military ethics training, which constitutes their first substantive engagement with the subject of military ethics. According to the Director of the Colombian School of Combined Arms, *"the course in military ethics, indeed, has proven to be very successful... it helped raise awareness of the topic of military ethics amongst the students as well as provide them with practical knowledge of how military ethics can be applied in real-life situations"* [I]. In December 2019, King's training received the endorsement of the Colombian Army's Training and Doctrine Command to expand the course across the whole Army [I].

### **Impacting military behaviour, shaping conduct and lives on the ground**

King's military ethics work is impacting military behaviour, shaping the operational conduct of military personnel and saving lives on the ground. As noted by Brigadier Toby Rowland *"time spent*

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*considering these issues as part of ongoing professional development and in particular prior to operational deployment definitely plays dividends later on” [J].*

By equipping participants with tools that can be applied in real life to analyse ethically challenging circumstances and determine the best course of action during combat operations and humanitarian crises, military personnel have highlighted how King’s military ethics training embeds core skills and is directly applicable to problems faced in the operational environment. For example, in anonymised course feedback with a sample set of 461 officers at the Colombian War College, 96.3% said the ethics training had had a positive impact on their professional lives and 94.9% said it had also had a positive impact on their family lives [H].

In Afghanistan, Brigadier Toby Rowland was tasked with assisting the Afghan National Army (ANA) in developing field surgical capabilities. He highlighted how the ethics engagement shaped thinking, noting that King’s research [6] had *“provided invaluable food for thought on a wide range of subjects, especially as regards to finding the right balance between legal, ethical and military considerations and how they related to the respective responsibilities of our clinical and operational leaders.... Not only did it provide invaluable assistance to me personally as a senior military medical planner, it helped shape the work that ultimately delivered a safe, sustainable field surgical capacity for the ANA...this went on to save a great many lives, relieved suffering on the battlefield, built capacity in the Afghan National Army and ultimately supported security transition in Helmand Province” [J].*

As senior figures in the SAS and Army Medical core attest, the long-lasting impact of ethics training can be seen in the new skills in military personnel which assist them in analysing complex courses of action and making life and death decisions more ethically and ultimately saving a great many lives [B,J].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

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- [A] Sources illustrating the development of Military Ethics Playing Cards: 1. King’s Centre for Military Ethics webpages 2. Military Ethics Playing Cards: User Feedback Survey. 3. Statistical Report from the King’s Centre for Military Ethics
- [B] Testimonial from: SAS Liaison Officer, 1 Aug 2018
- [C] The Royal College of Defence Studies 2017, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 4 Sept 2018
- [D] [text removed for publication]
- [E] Documents relating to the Afghanistan Inquiry Report: 1. Assistant Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force, letter of appointment, 2. General Campbell Press Briefing – IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry, 19 Nov 2020
- [F] Testimonial from: Tony Turner, Lieutenant Colonel, Royal Marines, 22 August 2017.
- [G] Testimonial from: Wing Commander Michael Almond, Consultant Physician (now Forces in Mind Professor of Veterans and Families Studies, Anglia Ruskin University), 13 June 2018
- [H] Testimonial from: Lt Col Marcus Doherty, Director of Australian Command and Staff Course (Reserve), 4 June 2020.
- [I] Testimonials relating to Colombian military ethics education: 1. Brigadier General Robinson Alexander Ramirez Cedeno, Commander of Training and Doctrine Command, National Army of Colombia, 17 Dec 2019, 2. Testimonial from: Major General Helder Fernan Giraldo Bonilla, Director of the Escuela Superior de Guerra, Colombia, 30 Aug 2020, 3. Testimonial from Jorge Mateus, Deputy Director, Escuela de Armas Combinadas del Ejercito, 9 Dec 2019
- [J] Testimonial from: Brigadier Toby Rowland, Commanding Officer, 2nd Medical Brigade, British Army [via letter], 18 April 2017